

Bad Hook-Up

By LCdr. Brian Boring


The title implies a blind date gone bad, but it's really the story behind my first cat shot on *Indy*. I was a brand new CAG LSO. I already had been introduced to *Iwo Jima* FCLPs, and this was my first at-sea period on the last of the small-deck carriers.

The brief was great fun, since all three of the bubbas I was flying with were recent RAG students of mine. I walked early as usual (I hate to be late for anything, much less a bag ex). We cranked up the airframe and taxied to cat 4. We got hooked up and would be first off the flight deck, looking for a depart and re-enter.

As my eyes traveled outside, I realized we were accelerating, but there was no associated kick. The only thing I knew for sure in that split second was I wasn't going flying today. My first instinct was to try and get the tow bar out of the shuttle before we were dragged into the drink. I selected nosewheel steering and jammed on the right brake. To my relief, the nose started to slide right, which provided the added benefit of getting me away from the port-deck edge. The next problem was to stop the aircraft. It wasn't whipping along, but it had built up some decent speed before I could get the engines back to idle. I got it stopped halfway down the cat track, cocked 45 degrees to the right, with two flattened-off tires. The holdback had not been seated fully and had slipped out when full power was applied.



Things were fine as I was signaled into tension and went heads-down to monitor instruments as my motors came to military power. My words follow my eyes during the run-up so my crew keeps abreast of what I am seeing. I normally say, "Strut-lock light is out, rpm, EGT, fuel flow, oil pressure, hydraulic pressure all in the green, IPI is stable, here we go Mary Joe." I got to hydraulic pressure and noticed the cat officer running backward.

As a RAG instructor and LSO, I have given so many cold-cat scenarios in the trainer that it's impossible to remember them all. About all you ask of the student is to recognize the situation and pull the handle. The question most asked of me then was, "Why didn't you just pull the handle?" I can't answer that question. I can tell you that, with a 1.2-second seat, I should have. 

LCdr. Boring flies with VAQ-132. He was the CVW-5 staff LSO during this incident.